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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to gather information concerning how school counseling graduate training programs are meeting the challenges of providing practicum and internship experiences. Subjects were 186 (55% of 341 surveyed) program faculty from school counselor preparation programs. A national survey assessed the practices of counselor training programs in providing experiential components such as practica and internships for school counselors in training. Analyses indicated considerable diversity among training programs. Practices reflect continuing trends toward longer, more rigorous and accredited programs. Internships are viewed as highly positive. Work may be needed in the areas of consistency in expectation of activities performed during internship and the training and remuneration of site supervisors. Three tables present results from surveys given to the school counseling preparation faculties. (SR)

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The Internship in School Counseling: A National Survey of Counselor Training Programs

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Abstract

A national survey assessed the practices of counselor training programs in providing experiential components such as practica and internships for school counselors in training. Practices reflect continuing trends toward longer, more rigourous and accredited programs. Internships are viewed as highly positive. Work may be needed in the areas of consistency in expectation of activities performed during internship and the training and remuneration of site supervisors.

The Internship in School Counseling: A National Survey of Counselor Training Programs

In 1959, Robert Stripling wrote that one essential aspect of counselor preparation is supervised practice in counseling and related guidance activities...practice planned in appropriate settings both off and on campus (as cited in Whittmer, 1993). As school counseling programs prepare for the 21st century, these supervised experiential components remain as a capstone of students' graduate programs.

Despite their importance and significance, until recently little has appeared in the professional literature concerning practica and internships (Pitt, 1992). School counseling as a profession and resulting graduate training programs grew rapidly after the National Defense Education Act in 1958. Since that time standards for practicum and internships have varied widely by program. A *Manual for Self-Study by a Counselor Education Staff* (ACES,1967) was an initial attempt at providing standards for training secondary school counselors. Since the early 1980's the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP 1980-1994) specifies that practica are to be 100 hours of closely supervised experiences aimed at developing individual and group counseling skills. Internships are 600 hours of site-based experiences where students practice the full range of school counseling duties. Currently 83 school counseling programs have attained CACREP accreditation (Hollis & Wantz, 1993).

The purpose of the study was to gather information concerning how all school counseling graduate training programs are meeting

the challenges of providing practicum and internship experiences. These challenges include issues of field supervision, accreditation and licensure, provision of a variety of experiences, and how students were scheduling the longer experiences typical of accredited programs. Historically school counselors have come from the teaching ranks and many have worked on school counselor credentialing by taking evening classes while teaching during the day. However, 30-36 semester hour part-time programs for teachers are becoming rare as revised programs are longer, more intense and include non-teachers (Randolph & Spence, 1994).

Methods

All school counselor preparation programs listed in Hollis and Wantz (1993) were surveyed in spring 1994. Return rate was 55% with 186 of 341 surveys returned. The survey instrument was designed to collect descriptive information concerning program organization and accreditation, certification and licensure, supervision issues, and program faculty. A section addressed whether activities in off-campus experiential components were ideal, typical or required. Perceived quality of the experience in relation to the entire school counseling program was assessed. Information was requested in terms of how students were scheduling longer experiences, for example, by requesting leaves of absence from employment, graduate assistantships, or paid internships. Respondents were also asked to list strengths and areas for improvement.

Results

Analyses indicate considerable diversity across training programs. Mean number of semester hours was 47.6 for 151 programs and 62.8 quarter hours for 25 programs using quarter hours. Most programs (144) awarded only masters degrees, 13 awarded an Ed.S and/or CAS, 14 programs included the doctorate and an additional 9 programs had other combinations of degrees. All programs reported some form of accreditation and most listed multiple accreditations. CACREP accreditation was listed by 45 programs, CACREP in progress by 36, NCATE (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education) by 105 and state accreditation by 71. Counselor licensure as a separate credential was available for selected graduates of 130 programs with school counseling graduates being eligible in 80 of these and some graduates in 31. A core school counseling models (e.g. the Missouri Model) was adopted in the states of 71 programs and mandated in 33.

Most programs contained additional counseling tracks (179) with 154 sharing a core curriculum. In 89 programs students majoring in another track could simultaneously satisfy requirements for school counseling, while 64 did not permit this option. Most programs (169) are located in states requiring a practicum or internship for school counselor credentialing.

Mean number of contact hours for all experiential components was 437. Populations served was overwhelmingly K-12 students (126), off campus, in a school setting. An important consideration is the type of activities experienced during an off-campus practicum or internship. Program coordinators were asked whether activities

were ideal, what we'd like to have, typical, what we commonly find, or required, what we minimally expect. Activities not checked were considered not part of the experience. Results are presented in Table 1.

Place Table 1 about here

Student arrangement of internship placement with subsequent university approval was the most common placement (38.2%) followed by program arrangement from a pre-approved list (20.2%). A majority of programs (86.2%) allowed students to do off-campus experiential components in schools where they are currently employed as teachers. However a number of respondents noted that this practice was discouraged. The average reported percentage for students doing internships in their own schools was 35%.

A concern with increased internship hours has been how students will arrange extensive experiences given that they are typically employed while attending graduate programs. Respondents to the survey indicated that 64% of students were part time. Table 2 summarized the responses to how students typically arranged extensive experiences. Released time from K-12 school day job settings was the most frequently checked, possibly related to the fact that many students do experiences in their own schools.

Place Table 2 about here

Provision for monetary remuneration of site supervisors for counselor trainees (17.3%) differed from that provided by universities for supervisors of student teachers (37.4%). In-kind payments such as tuition credit, library passes, or passes to athletic facilities were more common for school counseling supervisors (21.7%). Site supervisors were required to evaluate the success of the student's experiential component (95.08%). Letter grades were used by 61% of programs with 30% using a pass/fail system and 8.7% a combination of both letter grades and pass/fail.

Counselor educators responding to the survey were highly positive about the preparation of their school counseling students. Results are summarized in Table 3 and represents responses to a likert scale ranging from very poorly prepared to very well prepared. Counselor educators saw their students as between well prepared and very well prepared by both the experiential components and the school counseling program as a whole.

Place Table 3 about here

Open ended responses were requested to the questions: "What are the strengths of the total experiential component?; and What improvements would you like to see? The most frequent responses,

mentioned by nearly half who wrote responses alluded to the excellence of the off-campus supervision and the dedication of field site supervisors. Other comments mentioned the rigor of internships and the number of hours, the close ties with people in the field and the hands on experience in the school setting.

Responses to the areas for improvement did provide some challenges. Written comments indicated that addressing diversity issues in internship experiences was difficult. A number of respondents indicated the need for more quality control of site experiences and closer on-site supervision. Other respondents indicated that better established programs in the public schools were needed so that the experience would be closer to ideal. Some expressed a need for working students to get released time to do their internships and/or paid for their internship experience, as well as pay for on-site supervisors. A concern was summed up by one respondent who stated that some students have unsatisfactory experiences in off-campus placements due to a lack of regular supervision and specific guidelines for off-campus placements.

Discussion

Although a critical component of school counselor training, little exists in the literature concerning how practicum and internship experiences are actually operationalized. This study was designed to collect information about current practices. Programs seemed to reflect the trends toward longer, more rigorous programs and emphasis on accreditation that have been mentioned in recent literature (Hollis & Wantz, 1983; Randolph & Spence, 1994). Most

programs provide extensive field based experiences under the supervision of a practicing school counselor. These experiences are viewed very positively by counselor educators in terms of the practical preparation of students and in providing connections with counselors in the schools.

The survey did indicate some areas for concern. There has not evolved a consistent set of expectations for what students are to do while on internships and the nature of their placements. An examination of the information in Table 1 reveals that counselors in training may typically expect to be involved in activities considered non counseling such as discipline, general staff duties, and clerical duties. There seems an emphasis on individual counseling with somewhat less attention devoted to group work and consultation, important components of developmental counseling programs. This might be summed up by the comments of one respondent: "Weak point is secondary schools. Many counselors are locked in to doing administrative, non-counseling work. Tradition is strong; change is slow.

Another concern may relate to the selection, orientation, and remuneration of site supervisors. Drapela and Drapela (1986) noted that many school counselors who supervise interns do so without adequate preparation. Respondents to this survey indicated that in many cases students arrange internships at their own schools and then seek program approval. Most supervisors receive little remuneration for their services either monetary or in-kind which would have a limiting effect on what could be asked of them in terms of in-service or professional development. Off campus

Schmidt (1986) stated that school counselors are frequently the only mental health professionals available to assist students who are struggling with alcoholic parents, suicide, incest, stress, and other difficult situations. Pre-service professionals need quality experiences and the support of experienced professionals as they learn to deal with these situations. School counseling students are being asked to complete more rigorous programs and more extensive internships and in many states are now eligible for counselor licensure in addition to a school counseling credential. Continued research is needed to determine what aspects of practica and internships provide quality experiences for students and what organizational structures and resources are required to do so.

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Table 1

Activities in School Counseling Internships

Activity	NA	Ideal	Typical	Required
Agency Experience	48.7%	29.1%	11.5%	10.9%
Elementary Experience	3.2%	23.8%	23.0%	64.3%
Secondary Experience	3.2%	6.5%	25.8%	63.2%
Individual Counseling	1.0%	7.6%	19.8%	69.8%
Vocational Counseling	4.39%	9.9%	32.4%	51.6%
Group Counseling	1.6%	8.8%	24.72%	62.63%
Test Interpretation	6.5%	12.0%	34.0%	46.7%
Classroom Guidance	3.2%	10.9%	32.9%	51.0%
Workshops	10.4%	24.2%	43.4%	21.4%
Consultation with Teachers	2.2%	13.7%	29.7%	52.2%
Consultation with Parents	3.2%	17.0%	34.0%	43.9%
Committee Work	11.6%	18.8%	47.5%	21.5%
Evaluation Activities	10.4%	33.5%	30.2%	24.7%
Diverse Populations	4.3%	20.3%	35.1%	37.9%
Discipline	46.1%	8.3%	36.7%	8.3%
General Staff Duties	53.8%	5.4%	30.8%	9.3%
Extracurricular Activities	46.2%	8.8%	34.6%	19.9%
Report Writing	29.7%	14.8%	39.0%	15.4%
Clerical Duties	35.7%	6.0%	47.2%	9.9%
Audio Tape	15.4%	17.0%	18.1%	48.9%
Video Taping	20.9%	34.2%	19.2%	26.9%
Observation (one way mirror)	35.7%	36.8%	12.1%	14.8%
Office Space	9.9%	22.5%	40.1%	25.8%

Table 2

Arrangement of Internship

	N
Released time from K-12 setting	107
Leave of Absence from K-12 setting	86
Paid sabbatical from K-12	49
Job sharing from K-12	38
Part-time non-school employment	73
Graduate Assistantship	45
Other employment	72
Other	23

Table 3

Quality of Preparation

	Mean	SD
Experiential Component	4.344	.592
Program as Whole	4.378	.599